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ABSTRACT

Noting that one of the most important parts of knowing how to write well is to feel comfortable doing it, this information sheet lists some things parents can do to encourage their children to write and presents a series of writing activities. The information sheet notes that parents can: (1) show their children that they write often; (2) encourage their young children to scribble; (3) play writing and spelling games; (4) explain that math problems are a form of writing; and (5) talk about why people write. The information sheet presents four activities for young children, four activities for more advanced writers, and four activities for writers of any age. (RS)

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Learning Partners

ED 382 976

Let's Write!

One of the most important parts of knowing how to write well is to feel comfortable doing it. The magic in writing comes from the ideas you have. Let ideas flow, as they would if you were talking. The beauty of the written word is that you can always go back and make changes: rearrange the ideas, correct the spelling, add new ideas, take out ideas that don't fit. The important thing is to think of writing as a reflection of your thoughts.

Here are some things you can do:

- Show that you write often to make lists, take down messages, write notes to the school, write letters to friends.
- Write to your child: put a note in a lunch bag, make a birthday poster, send a postcard from work.
- Encourage your young children to get ready to write. They can scribble, draw pictures, make designs with letters.
- Play writing and spelling games: have family spelling bees, do crossword puzzles, play scrabble, play waiter or waitress.
- Explain that math problems are a form of writing. 2 + 3 = 5 is a sentence.
- Talk about why people write. Are they giving step-by-step instructions, telling a story according to when the events happened, describing how something looks, or trying to convince someone to do something?

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Writing Activities

Scribble Scrabble

for young children

1. Pick some of your child's favorite animals, book or television characters, or people he or she knows to write about
2. Plan a story, talking about what happens to the characters.
3. Ask your child questions: "What happens after Jose finds the magic box?" "What do you think Emily would do to get away from the bear?"
4. Have your child write down the story in comfortable ways, using scribbling that looks like writing, using letters and words that he invents, filling in pictures for words.

Investigative Reporting

for more advanced writers

1. Have your child gather information by interviewing someone in your family or your neighborhood.
2. Together, choose questions for the interview. Did the person live during a particularly exciting time in history? Did he or she accomplish a major achievement? What does the person do for a living?
3. Look at examples of written interviews in magazines. Using this format, have your child write down the responses from the interview.
4. Have your child edit the interview to cut out ideas that are repeated, to remove halting phrases such as "uh," or "you know", or to put the information in order by topic (sometimes when people talk, they jump back and forth from topic to topic)

Read What You Write

for writers of any age

1. Reading and writing go hand in hand. Have your child read school assignments aloud.
2. Explain that when you read, you should listen to how the writing sounds by asking yourself
   - Does the writing sound the way people talk?
   - Is it smooth or choppy?
   - Are there any words or ideas missing?
   - How could the writing be made more interesting? By adding descriptions, using examples, going into more detail with explanations?
3. Encourage your child to read with expression, emphasizing the words in the sentences that are most important to your child.
4. Encourage other children who might be listening to ask questions about the writing.

Resources: Information was taken from research by the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy and the *Helping Your Child* series of books for parents. For more information, please contact the National Library of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20208, telephone 1–800–424–1616.

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